

PRELIMINARY STAFF SUMMARY OF INFORMATION



Lake-Franklin Group

227-235 W. Lake St. and 173-191 N. Franklin St.

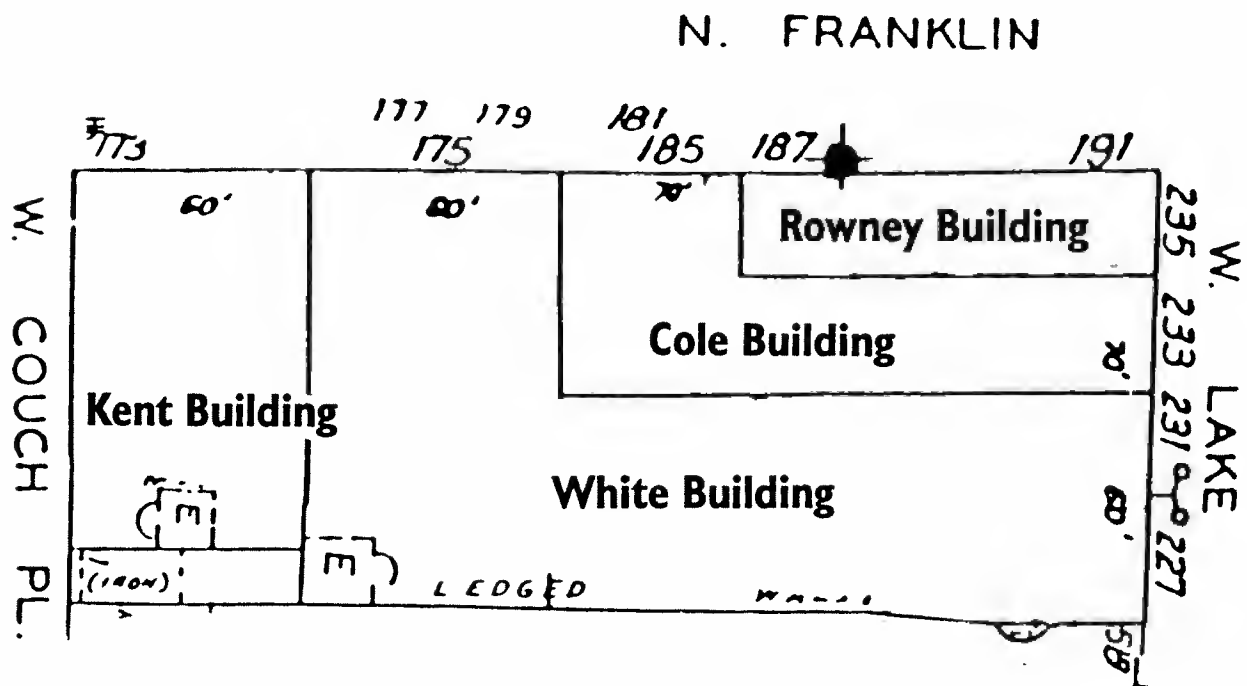
Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in April 1989

Recommended to the City Council on April 2, 1990



CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
J.F. Boyle, Jr., Commissioner



ABOVE: A map of the four buildings in the Lake-Franklin Group, an 1870s commercial block located at the southeast corner of Lake and Franklin streets. Because of their layout, three of the four buildings face both streets.

COVER: The Lake-Franklin Group is the largest collection of early post-Fire buildings left in Chicago's Loop. Shown are the Franklin Street facades of (left to right): the Rowney, Cole, White, and Kent buildings.

Lake-Franklin Group

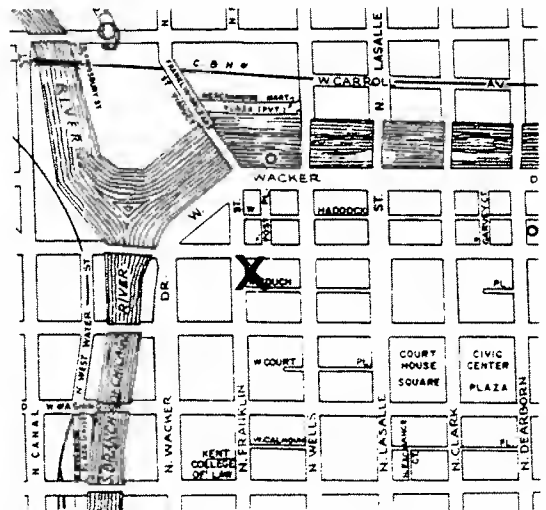
- ▶ **Rowney Bldg., 235 W. Lake/187-91 N. Franklin**
Built 1873; architect unknown
- ▶ **Cole Bldg., 233 W. Lake/185 N. Franklin**
Built 1873; Burling and Adler, architect
Addition 1896; Dankmar Adler, architect
- ▶ **White Bldg., 227-31 W. Lake/175-79 N. Franklin**
Built 1872; Burling and Adler, architect
- ▶ **Kent Bldg., 173-75 N. Franklin**
Built 1875; George Edbrooke, architect

The Lake-Franklin Group, which is located at the northwestern edge of the Loop, comprises the oldest--and largest--collection of buildings remaining in Chicago's central business district.

Because this commercial block is located on a corner, seven different facades are featured. The result is the city's best surviving example of what the downtown's streetscape looked like following its reconstruction after the Fire of 1871.

Each of the four buildings that make up the Lake-Franklin Group exhibit many of the distinctive, and now rare, features of post-Fire architecture, including cast-iron columns, incised stonework, decorative window hoods, and arched window openings.

Two of the buildings were designed by the partnership of Burling and Adler, one of the city's most prominent post-Fire architectural firms. A third building is the city's last remaining commercial building designed by George H. Edbrooke, another important architect.



The Lake-Franklin Group is located at the northwestern corner of the downtown Loop area.



STATE STREET, NORTH FROM MADISON.

This c.1886 drawing depicts the character of the city's commercial architecture following the Fire of 1871, but prior to the advent of the skyscraper. The buildings in the foreground housed the Mandel Brothers department store (later Wieboldt's). They were demolished in 1912.

Few cities, however, retain less of their Victorian-era commercial architecture than Chicago, where these buildings are often overlooked in favor of the highrise commercial architecture of the next generation.

A 1975 survey by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks found that just 75 of these 1870s-era commercial structures remained in the Loop. By the time of the next Commission survey, 15 years later, less than half (30) of those buildings still survived.

Following a comprehensive study in 1989, the Commission recommended to the City Council that 15 of the remaining post-Fire buildings be designated as Chicago Landmarks status. That number was further narrowed, after a series of public hearings, to just three *groups* of buildings: the Haskell-Barker-Atwater Buildings, the Washington Block, and Lake-Franklin Group.

Post-Fire Architecture in the Loop

In the years following the Fire of 1871, Chicago residents looked on with pride as the downtown's streetscape was rapidly rebuilt with imposing four- to six-story buildings. Unlike other American cities of the period, which included a mix of old and new structures, the total devastation—and rapid reconstruction—of Chicago's Loop resulted in a cohesive development of considerable grandeur. The result of this rebuilding effort was proudly referred to by the local press as the "New City."

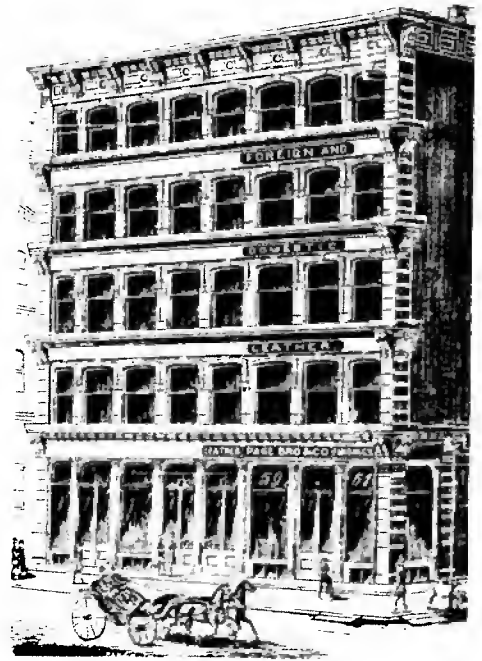
However, little did anyone suspect that these same buildings, within 20 years, would be viewed as obsolete and outmoded, the victims of new technologies, changing aesthetic tastes, and a rapidly expanding economic prosperity. Never in the history of Chicago architecture has any group of buildings undergone such a dramatic and rapid transition, from pride to derision, as did these imposing structures of the post-Fire era.

Furthermore, because their heyday was so brief, little attention has been given to their architectural significance, even though these post-Fire commercial buildings represent an important part of the city's architectural heritage and are significant precursors of its later architectural achievements.

Commercial buildings of the 1870s were of load-bearing construction: masonry exterior walls, interior wood or cast-iron columns, and wood floors and joists. Street elevations were of stone, brick, or cast iron, with a major division between the ground and upper stories.

The appearance of these buildings was as much the result of economic factors as aesthetic decisions. Their designs generally corresponded to the character of the streets on which they were located. The most elaborately executed buildings were those of the major hotels and retail stores, their ornate designs corresponding to their prominence and prestige. (None of these survive.)

The premier office buildings and major "mercantile lofts" from this period were smaller in scale, but only slightly less gradiose in design, than the hotels and department stores. The only premier office buildings that still survive in the Loop are the Delaware Building (36 W. Randolph; built 1872-74) and the Washington Block (40 N.



The Page Brothers Building, a designated Chicago Landmark, is one of the Loop's few remaining 1870s structures. This drawing shows its Lake Street facade, which is constructed of cast iron.

Wells; 1873-74). Surviving "second-class" office buildings include the Stone and Palmer buildings (15-23 and 25-27 W. Adams; 1872).

Mercantile loft buildings for major businesses were typically four- to six-stories tall and had approximately 50-60 feet of street frontage. Their interiors were left undivided, in order to facilitate their use for offices, warehousing, light manufacturing, or other commercial activities.

Their architectural quality was directly related to the property's economic value. For example, prestigious businesses that sought to locate along high-grade streets, such as Wabash Avenue, recognized the inherent promotional value of the building they would occupy. Consequently, they sought structures that were finely detailed, and many merchants featured drawings of the buildings on their stationery and in newspaper advertisements. Among the few remaining structures of this type are: the Haskell-Barker-Atwater Buildings (18-28 S. Wabash; built 1875-77) and the Page Brothers Building (177-191 N. State; 1872).



This birds-eye drawing shows what the northwest side of the Loop looked like in 1891, when it was a bustling commercial district near the Chicago River. The Lake-Franklin Group, the only large block of downtown buildings left from this period, is visible at the top center of the drawing (shaded area).

The so-called "second-class" mercantile lofts of this era were built on less-prestigious streets, where proximity to shipping and other wholesalers was of more value than was retail visibility. These buildings often were occupied by small firms and were used for a variety of mercantile activities, ranging from showrooms and offices to warehousing and light manufacturing.

Many were concentrated in the northwest corner of the Loop, close to the South Water Street Market and near the bustling river commerce that was centered at the bend in the Chicago River. The buildings in this area were narrower than the major mercantile lofts along such streets as Wabash—usually about 30-feet wide.

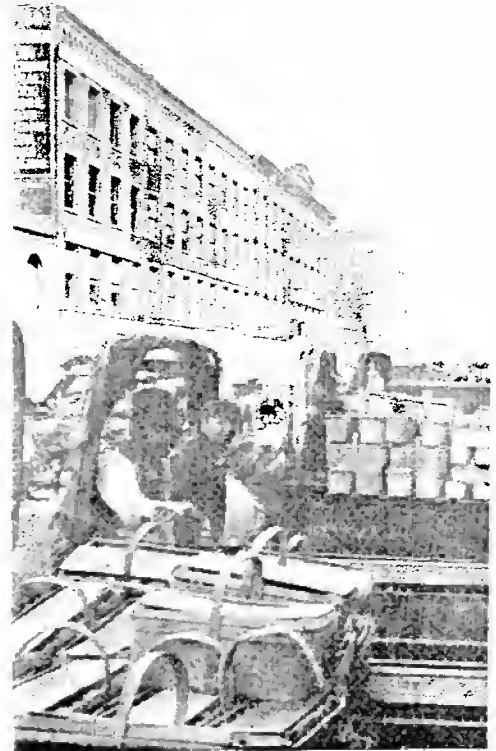
They also were designed in a less-ostentatious manner, but they still manifested the distinctive architectural treatments of the Victorian period. Cast-iron fronts were common, and the buildings—while narrow—were very long in depth. The best example of this type of structure—and the only significant group remaining in the Loop—are the four buildings that make up the Lake-Franklin Group.

It is difficult, today, to image the character of these building streetscapes, or to understand the level of achievement represented by the rebuilding of an entire downtown. An 1881 book by English novelist Lady Duffus Hardy offers one account:

The business streets are lined with handsome massive houses, some six or seven stories high, substantially built, sometimes of red brick with stone copings and elaborate carvings, while others are built of that creamy stone which reminds one of the Paris boulevards....On either side (of the street) are large handsome drygoods, millinery, and other stores of all possible descriptions....The different banks, churches, and municipal buildings which had been destroyed by the great fire-fiend are all re-erected in a substantial style, though with varying degrees of eccentric architecture.

Due to its proximity to Lake Michigan, the I&M Canal, and numerous rail lines, Chicago grew faster than most other American cities. Between 1877 and 1883, the population grew from 420,000 to nearly 600,000; by 1895, it had grown to more than one million.

Although its central business district of five- and six-story buildings had been adequate for the business needs of a city of 500,000 residents, as the city grew the limitations on continued Loop expansion became apparent. Development to the west, north, and east was barred by



A turn-of-the-century photograph of the South Water Street Market, which was located just one block from the Lake-Franklin Group. These buildings were demolished in the 1920s, as part of the construction of Wacker Drive.

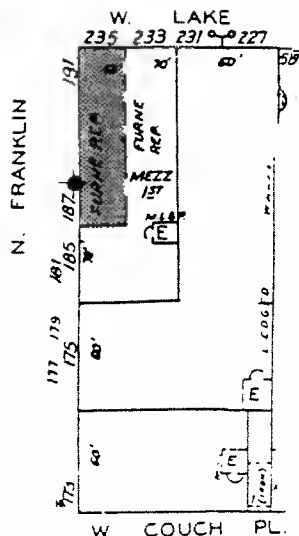
the lake and river, while the tangle of railroad tracks forestalled development south. Consequently, vertical development became the only means of maintaining the commercial viability of the central area.

The development of "skeleton frame construction" literally allowed buildings to reach new heights. The 10-story Home Insurance Building, which was constructed in 1885 at the northeast corner of LaSalle and Adams streets (demolished in 1931) was the first structure to apply this new framing technique to high-rise commercial architecture. Equally significant were: the development of sophisticated passenger elevators, innovations in building foundations, and the evolution of terra cotta as both an exterior building cladding and for interior fireproofing.

By the 1890s, the post-Fire structures were already being regarded in nostalgic terms. *The Standard Guide to Chicago* (1891) noted the passing of these structures:

The Bryan block (northwest corner of Monroe and LaSalle streets) is another of the back-number of great buildings of the city. I very well remember that 15 years ago it was pointed out with pride; now it isn't pointed out at all....(but) its central location makes it one of the most valuable pieces of property in the city. [The Bryan Block was demolished in 1904 for the construction of the Northern Trust Bank Building.]

Following is a description of the four buildings that comprise the Lake-Franklin Group, the largest surviving ensemble of 1870s buildings in the central business district.



Rowney Building

235 W. Lake St.

This four-story structure is the corner building in the Lake-Franklin Group. It was built in 1873 by William Rowney, an out-of-town investor. The original permit does not state the name of the architect.

Like other buildings along this section of Lake Street, the Rowney was designed to be used by small wholesale firms. Among its early tenants, according to an 1874 directory, were a leather manufacturer (Lenox B. Shephard) and a hay wholesaler (N. R. Foster). A corner saloon (Hugh Kelley, proprietor) is believed to have occupied the ground floor.



The Rowney Building is located at the corner of Lake and Franklin streets. One of its facades is partially obscured by the "L" structure—built 24 years *after* the building.

The Rowney Building is the simplest of the Lake-Franklin Group in its architectural treatment. Its principal facade fronts on Lake Street, and the brickwork of its upper stories is varied by continuous stone sill lines and round window hoods, featuring prominent keystones. The punched window openings of its secondary (Franklin Street) facade are detailed with stone keystones and sills.

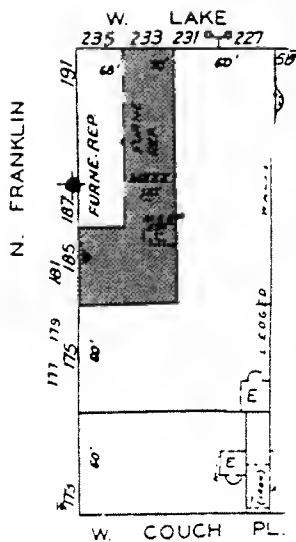
The exterior originally incorporated a stuccoing technique called "paring." Because face brick was difficult to obtain in the post-Fire years, structures often were built of common brick salvaged from the fire ruins. A cement-like veneer, called parge, then was applied over the common brick and detailed with false brick joints to simulate the appearance of more expensive face brick. Sections of this parging still remain on the Rowney Building, although much of the underlying common brick long ago was painted over.

The only changes to the exterior are the removal of its original cornice and a storefront modernization that took place along the Lake Street side of the building in 1951, shortly after it was occupied by the M.R. Lome office furniture company. The original, cast-iron columns still survive behind the aluminum-and-glass storefront. The Franklin Street elevation remains largely intact.

Cole Building

233 W. Lake St./185 N. Franklin St.

This L-shaped structure, which wraps around the Rowney Building, has both a Lake and Franklin street entrance. It was built in 1873, as a four-story building, by Samuel Cole. Its original tenants included one of the city's leading tanners and leather dealers (C.C. Wallin & Sons), a mitten manufacturer (Katzauer & Perlinsky), and a hat and cap wholesaler (Isaacs & Kaplan).



The Cole Building's Franklin Street facade (center in photo). A fifth story was added in 1896 to this 1873 structure. Also visible are portions of the Rowney (left) and White buildings (right).

The Cole Building was designed by Burling & Adler, one of the city's most prolific architectural firms during the 1870s. In addition to designing dozens of new buildings, Burling & Adler supervised the reconstruction of many of the buildings that had been damaged or destroyed by the Great Fire, including St. James Episcopal Cathedral, at 675 N. Wabash Ave.

Edward Burling (1819-92) came to Chicago in 1843, establishing himself initially as a carpenter and builder before opening his architectural practice. He is considered to be the city's second professional architect (after John M. Van Osdel), and he designed many prominent commercial and residential buildings. One of the most notable is the Nickerson House at 40 E. Erie St. (built 1883), which is a designated Chicago Landmark.

Dankmar Adler (1844-1900) was a partner of Burling's from 1871-79, but he achieved his greatest fame from his association with Louis H. Sullivan, from 1880-95. That firm's work, which includes the Auditorium Building in Chicago, the Wainwright Building in St. Louis, and the Guaranty Building in Buffalo, was significant in establishing the tenets of modern architecture.

In contrast to the design of those late-19th century structures, however, the exterior of the Cole Building is relatively simple in style. Its Lake Street elevation is three windows in width, while the Franklin Street elevation is four windows wide. The upper floors on both facades (except for a later, one-story addition) have window openings similar in size to its neighbors, but its window hoods are constructed of ornamental terra cotta. This, alone, is of considerable importance, as it represents the downtown's earliest surviving building to have used terra cotta in its construction.

The material was supplied by the Chicago Terra Cotta Company, which was founded in 1868 and is believed to be the first such manufacturer in the U.S. Although terra cotta was slow to gain acceptance by architects and builders, the shortage of building materials following the Fire of 1871 greatly enhanced its viability. Within a decade, terra cotta had become one of the leading building materials throughout the nation.

In 1896, an extra story was added to the Cole Building to accommodate the wholesale drug firm of M.L. Bartlett & Company. Designed by Dankmar Adler, this addition removed the original cornice and extended the flat masonry wall of the original building, but without the ornamental terra-cotta window hoods. Instead of a

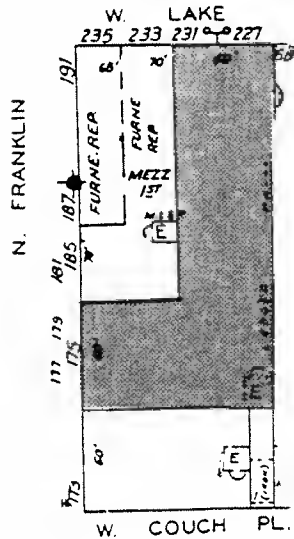


The distinctive features of the Cole Building include cast-iron storefront columns (below) and decorative, terra-cotta window hoods (above).



projecting cornice, the addition was capped by a plain, patterned brick parapet.

As with the Rowney Building, the ground floor of the Cole Building's Lake Street side was remodeled in 1951, although the original cast-iron columns survive. The storefront of the Franklin Street elevation is relatively intact, including its cast-iron columns.



White Building

227-31 W. Lake St./175-79 N. Franklin St.

This is the earliest of the structures in the Lake-Franklin Group. It was built in 1872 by the estate of Alexander White, a builder who had constructed many of the immediate post-Fire structures along Franklin Street.

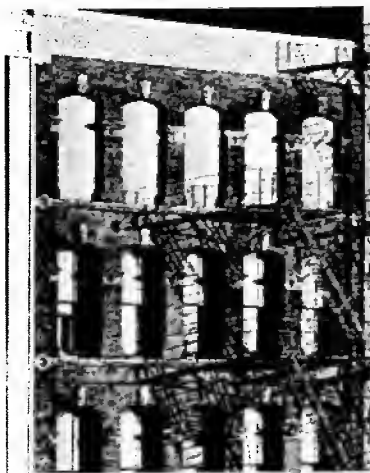
The White Building is also the largest of the four buildings in this commercial block. Its L-shaped floor plan wraps around the Cole Building, and both its Lake and Franklin street elevations are five windows in width.

Its early tenants, according to a 1874 business directory, included: a manufacturer of iron and woodworking machinery (C.L. Rice and Company), at the Lake Street address; and the Anderson Steam Heating Company and the Aux Sable Sand-Stone Quarry Company, both at the Franklin Street address.

Designed by Burling & Adler, the White Building's exterior combines high-quality, red, pressed-brick with a buff-colored Joliet limestone trim. The facade is enlivened by ornamental stone details, which can be found in: the keystones (at the top of the arched windows); the "impost blocks" (between the windows); and at the end of the sill courses (beneath the windows).

Although some of the decorative stone features have been sheared off of the Franklin Street facade, they are still intact—although slightly eroded—on the Lake Street elevation. The decorative cornice no longer exists.

The original, ornamental cast-iron columns at the ground level remain on both street elevations. However, the storefronts were set back from the front of the building, as part of a rehabilitation project in 1982, in order to create a covered pedestrian arcade.



The White Building's brick facades feature ornamental stone details characteristic of post-Fire architecture.

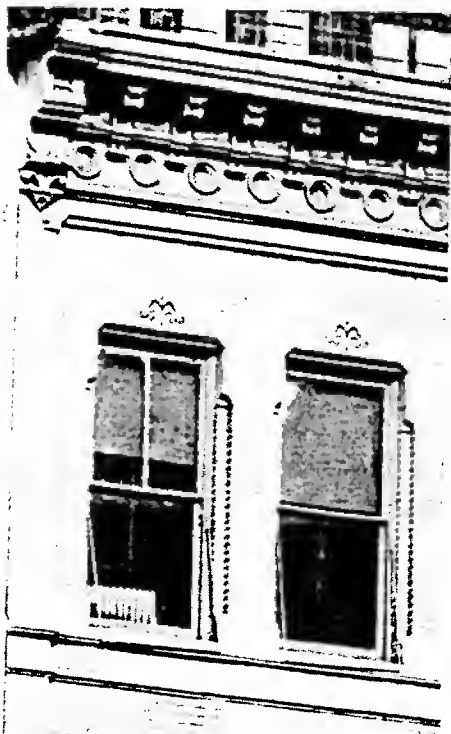
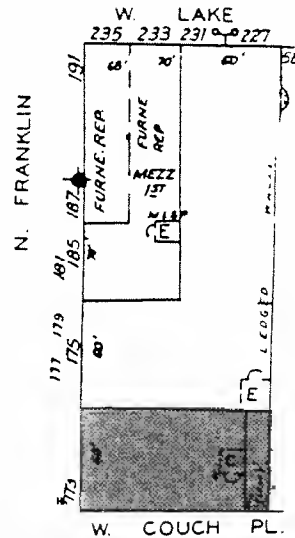
Kent Building

173-75 N. Franklin St.

The Kent Building is the most intact of the four buildings in the Lake-Franklin Group. Its ornamental, projecting cornice still survives, and its brick-and-stone front facade makes it the most lavishly detailed of those facing Franklin Street.

It was the last of the four buildings to have been constructed, having been built in 1875 by Albert E. Kent, presumably as an speculative loft property, intended for rental to small manufacturers or wholesalers.

Kent was one of the city's leading meatpackers, having formed the livestock packing and shipping firm of A.E. Kent and Company (later the Chicago Packing and Provision Company) in 1854. Both he and his brother, Sidney, were officials at the Chicago Board of Trade and the Union Stockyards. Albert Kent moved to San Rafael, Calif., sometime in the early 1870s, but retained some business interests in Chicago.



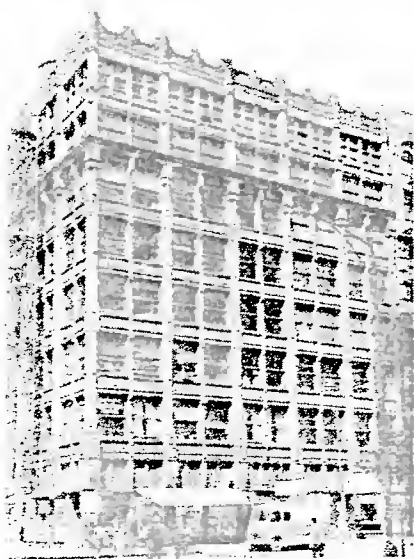
The Kent Building, built in 1875, is the "youngest" of the four structures in the Lake-Franklin Group. Its upper stories feature an ornate cornice and finely detailed brick and stonework.

The architect for the Kent Building was George H. Edbrooke, who practiced widely—both in Chicago and New York—prior to his death in 1894. Among his best-known buildings were: the Brooklyn (N.Y.) Savings Bank, the Sibley Warehouse (315 N. Clark St.; 1883; demolished), the Willoughby Building (234 S. Franklin St.; 1887; demolished), and the South Park Congregational Church (3980-98 S. Drexel Blvd.; 1885). The Kent Building is the only Edbrooke-designed commercial building to survive.

The horizontal striping of the Kent Building, which is produced by stonework coursing that “steps” between and over the windows, is a particularly fine example of a once-common masonry technique. Unlike the arched windows of its neighbors, the Kent’s are flat-arched, and are further embellished with incised ornament in the lintels and chamfered brick piers.

The small separation between the windows on the Kent Building, especially when contrasted to the “punched-out” windows of its neighbors, suggest how architects in the mid- and late-1870s were beginning to open up the fronts of buildings. Another example of this large-windows-and-less wall-area approach is the Haskell-Barker buildings, 18-24 S. Wabash Ave., also built in 1875.

The Kent Building is surprisingly intact. A rehabilitation project in 1982 cleaned the brick exteriors of both it and the White Building, while revealing the long-hidden cast-iron columns on the ground floor and creating a recessed storefront.



Among the other buildings designed by George Edbrooke, the architect of the Kent Building, are: the Willoughby Building (left; now demolished) and the South Park Congregational Church (right).



APPENDIX

Criteria for Designation

The following criteria, as set forth in Section 2-120-620 of the Municipal Code of Chicago, were considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether the Lake-Franklin Group should be recommended for landmark designation.

CRITERION I

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the U.S.

The Lake-Franklin Group is historically significant for its association with the Chicago Fire of 1871. They are the first structures built on their sites after the Fire and, as such, epitomize the renewal efforts following one of the worst catastrophes to occur in the United States during the 19th century.

These buildings are exemplary of the process of urbanization that occurred in the decade following the Fire. While a few other buildings of this vintage may exist elsewhere in the city, few—if any—of those were built on the rubble of the structures destroyed in the Fire.

Furthermore, these 1870s commercial buildings had an impact on an even broader national context, according to architectural historian Richard Longstreth:

Just as with New York, Chicago's mid-century architecture to a large degree set the standard for development in smaller cities and in towns. The universality of the language of mid-century commercial architecture...stems from the widespread desire to emulate work done in the largest of cities, which for many Americans was virtually synonymous with Chicago.

CRITERION 3

Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

In the years following the Great Fire, the city looked on with pride as the downtown streetscape was rapidly rebuilt with imposing four- to six-story buildings that represented the rebirth of an devastated city. The buildings of the Lake-Franklin Group are, through their developers and architects, identified with a collection of persons who significantly contributed to the redevelopment of the City of Chicago.

Samuel Cole, Albert E. Kent, William Rowney, and Alexander White were among the group of local investors and businessmen who helped to rebuild the Loop following the Fire, contributing dozens of buildings for use by some of the businesses displaced by the Fire. Albert Kent, for instance, was the founder of one of the city's top meat packing companies and, together with his brother Sidney, was a longtime official of the Chicago Board of Trade and the Union Stockyards. Alexander White, a successful pre-Fire builder, constructed dozens of post-Fire buildings.

Mercantile lofts, such as those in the Lake-Franklin Group, were constructed as investment properties, available for lease to other businesses. These buildings—of which very few still exist—were critical in housing the industries that led the rebirth of Chicago. Among the early businesses that occupied the Lake-Franklin Group were: a tannery and leather dealer, a manufacturer of iron and woodworking machinery, a sandstone company, a steam heating company, mitten and hat manufacturers, and, of course, a corner saloon.

CRITERION 4

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

The Lake-Franklin Group comprises the largest remaining group of early-Victorian era commercial buildings in the Loop. Taken together, they provide a rare

glimpse of what the city looked like in the decades following the Great Fire of 1871, and they are extraordinarily rare survivors of a building type that has all but disappeared from the central business district.

Their significance, however, lies not only in their rarity but in: the design of their facades, the stylistic articulation of their details, and the high quality of craftsmanship demonstrated throughout. The Lake-Franklin Group exhibits many of the distinctive—and now rare—features of post-Fire architecture, including cast-iron columns, incised stonework, decorative window hoods, and arched window openings.

The Lake-Franklin Group also includes one of the oldest surviving examples of the use of terra cotta as a building material (the Cole Building), a material that proved influential to the architectural development of Chicago and many other cities.

CRITERION 5

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

Two of the buildings in the Lake-Franklin Group (the Cole and White buildings) were designed in 1872-73 by the partnership of Edward Burling and Dankmar Adler, one of the city's most important architectural firms during the latter part of the 19th century.

Burling, the city's second professional architect, designed many prominent commercial and residential buildings, including the Nickerson House (a Chicago Landmark) and St. James Episcopal Cathedral, a rare surviving pre-Fire structure.

Adler, one of the city's most influential architectural engineers, achieved his greatest fame for his association—from 1880-95—with Louis H. Sullivan. Their collaborations include such masterpieces as the Auditorium Building in Chicago, the Guaranty Building in Buffalo, and the Wainwright Building in St. Louis.

Another structure in the Lake-Franklin Group, the Kent Building, is the last remaining commercial building in Chicago by George H. Edbrooke, whose designs included such influential works as the Sibley Warehouse and the Willoughby Building, both of which have been demolished.

Significant Historical or Architectural Features

Whenever a building, site, structure or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks identifies the significant features of the property, in order for owners and the public to understand which elements are most important to the significance of the landmark.

These features are also important in carrying out the Commission's permit review responsibilities to evaluate the effect of proposed alterations to "any significant historical or architectural feature" of the landmark or landmark district (as required by Section 2-120-770, 780 of the Municipal Code of Chicago).

Based on its evaluation of the Lake-Franklin Group, the staff recommends that the significant historical or architectural features of this proposed landmark be identified as: the Lake and Franklin street exterior elevations, including the buildings' rooflines.



A 1975 photo of the Lake-Franklin Group, prior to the remodeling of its ground floor (see front cover).

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Additional research material used in the preparation of this report is on file at the office of the Chicago Department of Planning and Development's Landmarks Division.

Acknowledgments

CITY OF CHICAGO

Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

J. F. Boyle, Jr., Commissioner

Charles Thurow, Deputy Commissioner

Staff

Timothy Barton, research and writing

Cedric Jones, production

James Peters, writing and layout

Timothy Samuelson, research

Illustrations

Bob Thall (cover, pp. 7, 8, 11 right)

Chicago Department of Planning and Development
(inside front cover, p. 1)

From *History of Chicago*, 1886 (p. 2)

Chicago Historical Society (p. 3)

From *Bird's-Eye Views and Guide to Chicago*;
Rand, McNally & Co., 1893 (p. 4)

From *Chicago at the Turn of the Century in Photographs*,
1984 (p. 5)

Rusty Culp (pp. 9, 10, 11 left, 16)

From *Lakeside Business Directory*, 1874
(inside back cover, right)

Chicago Public Library (inside back cover, left)

This report was produced in September 1996.

It is based on an earlier research report: *1870s Commercial Buildings in the Loop*.

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CHICAGO.

Above: An 1874 advertisement for one of the early tenants of the Lake-Franklin Group (the address today would be 177 N. Franklin St.)

Left: The series of headlines that appeared on a special Sept. 29, 1872 edition of *The Chicago Times*, which commemorated the first anniversary of the Great Fire of 1871. Among the newly-constructed structures mentioned in the article are those in the Lake-Franklin Group, one of the Loop's few remaining collections of post-Fire buildings.

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

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The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual buildings, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, whose offices are located at 320 N. Clark St., Room 516, Chicago, IL 60610; Ph: 312-744-3200; TDD Ph: 744-2958.